

Introduction

The City of Seattle, Human Services Department (HSD) contracted with AIDS Housing of Washington (AHW) to facilitate an HIV/AIDS housing needs assessment and planning process for all of King County. A Steering Committee guided the process between February and July 2004.

The needs assessment process included: focus groups with people living with HIV/AIDS, a consumer housing survey, interviews with key housing and service stakeholders, and a review of relevant planning and epidemiological data. The Steering Committee interpreted findings, identified critical issues, and developed recommendations.

The *2004 Seattle-King County HIV/AIDS Housing Plan* reflects the work of a wide range of community stakeholders committed to improving housing and related services for individuals living with HIV/AIDS and their families in King County. Housing and services providers, people living with HIV/AIDS, and others from across the county participated in the needs assessment process and provided input and feedback on the plan document.

Background

The City of Seattle, Human Services Department (HSD) and the local AIDS Housing Committee determined that better information was needed about the housing needs of people living with HIV/AIDS in King County. As the local grantee of Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA) program funds from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), HSD contracted with AIDS Housing of Washington to facilitate a community-based needs assessment and planning process leading to a countywide HIV/AIDS housing strategy. HOPWA funds were made available for the needs assessment and plan by HSD and by HUD's National HOPWA Technical Assistance Program.

AIDS Housing of Washington (AHW) has developed more than 140 units of housing for people living with HIV/AIDS in King County since its founding in 1988. AHW also provides information, planning assistance, consultations, and training in communities nationwide, and has worked in more than thirty regions to develop comprehensive HIV/AIDS housing plans. AHW's goal is to help stabilize the lives of individuals and families through improving access to affordable housing and appropriate support services.

The planning process began in October 2003 when AHW collaborated with Public Health – Seattle & King County (Public Health), HIV/AIDS Program to conduct a series of focus groups with people living with HIV/AIDS. In February 2004, the Steering Committee first met and continued to guide the process and plan development through July 2004. The Steering Committee included members of the AIDS Housing Committee as well as representatives from organizations across King County that provide housing and services to a broader population. AHW has facilitated HIV/AIDS housing needs assessments in King County since 1997.

Community-Based Needs Assessment and Planning Process

Interested community members, including people living with HIV/AIDS, representatives of HIV/AIDS service and housing organizations, housing developers, members of local government agencies, advocates, and others participated in this needs assessment and planning effort. Findings from the needs assessment will inform future community planning and agency program development. The community-based planning process included a number of key components, which are outlined here.

Steering Committee: A Steering Committee was formed in February 2004 to oversee and guide the needs assessment and planning process. The committee was comprised of representatives from community-based organizations that provide housing and services to low-income people, including those living with HIV/AIDS, mental illness, and substance use issues, and those who are homeless. Members of the Steering Committee reviewed background information and other written data related to HIV/AIDS, housing affordability, homelessness, and dedicated resources; identified critical issues; developed recommendations; and approved the final plan. Steering Committee members are listed with their affiliations at the beginning of the plan.¹ Minutes from each Steering Committee meeting can be found in *Appendix I*.

Key stakeholder interviews: Key stakeholder interviews were held with 154 people identified by Steering Committee members and other involved stakeholders. Group and individual interviews were conducted with case managers, housing and service providers, housing developers, government representatives, clinical social workers, and other concerned community members, including members of the Steering Committee.² These stakeholders were identified as those most knowledgeable as well as able to provide leadership in the future on related issues. Issues identified by key stakeholders were summarized by AHW and are presented in a chapter of the plan.

Housing survey: A total of 536 people living with HIV/AIDS completed a housing survey that addressed individuals' housing histories, needs, and preferences. AHW analyzed and summarized the survey results, which are presented in a chapter of the plan. Complete survey data appears in *Appendix IV*.

Consumer focus groups: Consumers were also included in the needs assessment process through focus groups, which were held in partnership with Public Health. These allowed for more qualitative and broader-ranging information than the survey. A total of 66 people living with HIV/AIDS participated in ten focus groups jointly facilitated by AHW and Public Health staff. Consumer focus group summaries appear in *Appendix II*.

Document review and summary: Data related to HIV/AIDS epidemiology, population demographics, income and housing affordability, homelessness and related issues, and dedicated HIV/AIDS housing resources were reviewed and summarized in the plan by AHW staff.

¹ Please see the comprehensive list of Steering Committee members and agency affiliations at the front of this plan.

² Please see the comprehensive list of key stakeholders and agency affiliations at the front of this plan.

Seattle-King County HIV/AIDS Housing Plan

This plan provides a framework for addressing the housing needs of people living with HIV/AIDS. It represents the efforts of a broad cross section of concerned citizens committed to improving housing stability for people living with HIV/AIDS and their families throughout King County.

Given the dynamic nature of HIV and AIDS and other factors that affect housing and service planning, it is essential to regularly reassess the needs of people living with HIV/AIDS and the most appropriate strategies to meet those needs. It is intended that this plan be built upon, revised, and expanded as current objectives are met and new gaps and needs emerge.